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Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs

May 1, 2008

The following statement was issued by the Honourable John Hickey, Minister of Labrador Affairs. It was also read in the House of Assembly:

Government Continues to Enhance Air Foodlift Subsidy

I rise today to inform all honourable members of this government's ongoing efforts in Labrador to support healthy living through the Air Foodlift Subsidy program administered by the Department of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs

As the members opposite are well aware, on Tuesday this government delivered a historic budget that will see Newfoundland and Labrador soon cast off our have-not status. The Williams Government has delivered a fiscal plan to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that is meeting today's challenges with a view for long-term prosperity.

As Minister of Labrador Affairs I was especially pleased to see in Budget 2008 unprecedented spending through the *Northern Strategic Plan for Labrador*. Part of the goal of this plan is to address the challenges faced by the people of Labrador, this includes making sure they have access to nutritious foods that are affordable, particularly in the winter months when transportation routes are especially challenged. We do this through the Air Foodlift Subsidy program. In Budget 2008 the annual budget for the program has been increased from \$400,000 annually to \$600,000.

The Air Foodlift Subsidy program is providing the people of coastal Labrador access to nutritious perishable foods during the winter months at reasonable prices. Extensive community consultations have resulted in positive enhancements to the AFS such as beginning the program earlier in the season and providing a healthier food item list. The ongoing improvements and increased investment in the program, based on community consultations, are a testament to this government's firm commitment to the coastal people of Labrador.

The standard of living on the coast of Labrador is continuing to improve year after year. According to a recent federal survey, in 2007 a family of four living on the north coast of Labrador had the lowest weekly food costs of all of the northern isolated communities surveyed.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador remains firmly and deeply committed to the Air Foodlift Subsidy program. We will continue to monitor the program closely and value all public input as we work to further improve this vital service.

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1:55 p.m.



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